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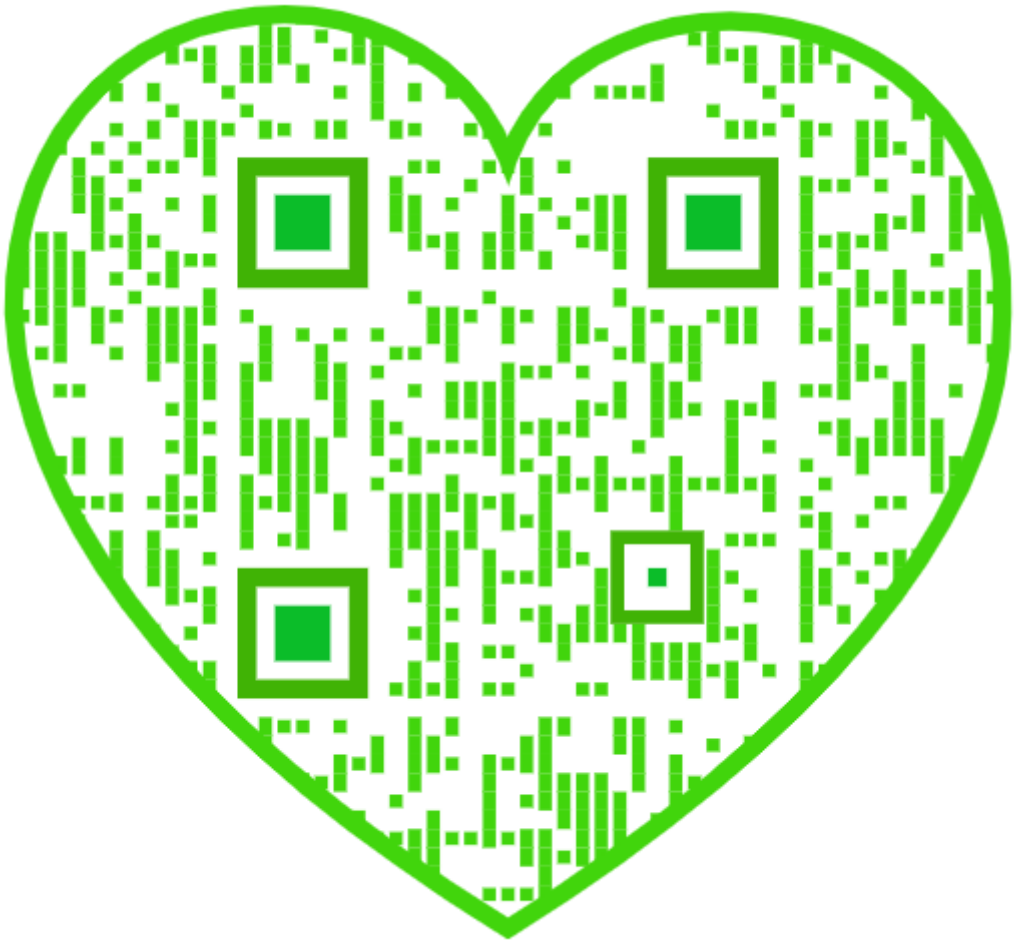

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## WHIST, OR BUMBLEPUPPY?

L.6.

TEN LECTURES ADDRESSED TO CHILDREN.

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BY

**PEMBRIDGE.**

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# WHIST,

OR

# BUMBLEPUPPY?

## Ten Lectures addressed to Children.

By PEMBRIDGE.

"Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
Emollunt mores, nec sinuisse feros."—*The Newcomes.*

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# PREFACE.

THESE remarks are addressed to the young, in the hope that when they arrive at man's estate they will use their best endeavors to do away with Law 91.

To the present generation already acquainted with "the game," I should no more presume to offer advice than I should presume to teach my lamented grandmother to suck eggs, if she were still alive.

> "To instruct them, no art could ever reach,
> No care improve them, and no wisdom teach."
>
> *Proverbs*, chap. 27, v. 22.

# WHIST, OR BUMBLEPUPPY?

## LECTURE I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

"Vacuis committere venis
Nil nisi lene decet."—*Eton Grammar.*

"Those that do teach young babes
Do it with gentle means and easy tasks."—SHAKESPERE.

As, humanly speaking, you will probably play something for the next fifty years, should you select either whist or bumblepuppy,* it will be as well for your

* "That there are a large number of players who think they play whist, and yet do not reason, is too true; but such play may be bumblepuppy, or some other game, it certainly is not whist."—*Westminster Papers.*

DEFINITION OF BUMBLEPUPPY.

Bumblepuppy is persisting to play whist, either in utter ignorance of all its known principles, or in defiance of them, or both.

Hudibras has given another definition:—

"A liberal art, that costs no pains
Of study, industry, or brains."

own comfort—the comfort of others is a minor consideration*—to have some idea of their general principles. But first you must decide which of these two games you intend to play; for though they are often confounded together, and are both supposed to be governed by the same ninety-one laws and a chapter on etiquette, they differ much more distinctly than the chalk and cheese of the present day. Professor Pole, in his "Theory of Whist," Appendix B, has made a very skilful attempt (by modifying the maxims of whist) to make the two games into a kind of emulsion. I was rather taken with this; and, having been informed that the most incongruous materials will mix if you only shake them together long enough, I have given his plan a fair trial, and failed.

It may be that I had not sufficient patience and perseverance, but the principal cause of failure I found to be this: The bumblepuppist only admires his own eccentricities: and, if a person of respectable antecedents gets up a little pyrotechnic display of false cards for his own private delectation, he utterly misses the point of the joke, he fails even to see that it is clever; if such a comparison may be drawn without offence, he doesn't consider what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

* In all well-regulated society, your aim should be the greatest happiness of the greatest number; and that number is notoriously number one.

In the face of this difficulty, I should recommend you to treat them as separate games. As you go down in the scale, they closely approximate. That extremes meet, is a law of nature; and between the worst whist and the best bumblepuppy it is almost impossible to draw the line.

Other elementary forms, protozoa for instance, are often so much alike that it is difficult to decide whether they are plants or animals. But representative specimens of each game, beyond being found at the same table,—in scientific slang, having the same habitat,—have scarcely one point in common: you might just as reasonably mistake horseradish for beef.

If you elect whist (I shall refer to the laws later on), begin by learning the leads, and the ordinary play of the second, third, and fourth hand, which you will find in any whist-book:* this can be done in a few days; then after cutting for partners (see note to Law 14), as soon as the cards are dealt, *not before* (see note to Law 45):—

(1) Take up your hand;

(2) Count your cards (see notes to Laws 42 and 46);

(3) Sort them into suits;

(4) Look them over carefully;

* "Do not attempt to practise till you have acquired a competent knowledge of the theory."—MATHEWS, A.D. 1800.

(5) Fix firmly in your memory not only the trump suit but the trump card; then

(6) Give your undivided attention to the table: *it is there, and not in your hand, the game is played;*

(7) *See every card played in the order it is played;** 

(8) When you deal, place the trump card apart from the rest of the suit, that you may know at once which it is.

N.B.—Knowing is always better than the very best thinking, and generally much more easy: by these simple means you get rid at once and forever of all such childish interruptions as "Draw your card!" "Who led?" "What are trumps?" which, by their constant repetition, not merely worry and annoy the rest of the table, but tend to destroy any clue to the game that you yourself might otherwise possess.

It is a good plan to sit clear of the table; and then, if you are constrained to drop a few cards, they at any rate fall on the floor, where they cannot be called.

So far, I have assumed your object to be whist. If your end and aim is bumblepuppy, you need do done of these things: you can learn the leads and the recognized play—more or less imperfectly—in a few years by practice, or you can leave them unlearned;

* "The first whist lesson should be to keep your eye on the table, and not on your own cards."

"We cannot all have genius, but we can all have attention: the absence of intelligence we cannot help, inattention is unpardonable." —*Westminster Papers.*

"Build by whatever plan caprice decrees,
With what materials, on what ground, you please."
COWPER.

Ignorance imparts variety to the game, and variety is charming. You can set all laws at defiance; and if any one objects.—after much wrangling,—you can refer the matter in dispute to the "Westminster Papers," * and hang it up for a month certain (this is a better plan than writing to "The Field," for there you only get a week's respite).

Should you be in any doubt whether whist or the other game is your vocation, the first half-dozen times you play make it a rule never to look at the last trick; and if at the end of that time you find the difficulty insuperable, give up, as hopeless, all idea of being a whist-player.

## NOTES ON SOME OF THE LAWS.

"Vir bonus est quis?
Qui consulta patrum, qui leges juraque servat."—*Eton Grammar.*

I have mentioned that there are ninety-one laws. The wording of the first is not strictly accurate: it ought to be, "The rubber is *generally* the best of three games;" for, though I myself have never seen more than four, it may consist of any number, as the following decisions show:—

* Since these words were written, the "Westminster Papers" is no more.

"Sit tibi terra levis!"

*Decision A.*—The rubber is over when one side has won two games, and remembers it has done so: memory must be brought to bear before the other side has won two games, and remembers it has done so.

*Decision B.*—If a game is forgotten, it is no part of the losers' duty to remind the winners of the fact.

Law 5.—This law is clear enough: still, the first time you revoke and are found out, if your opponents hold honors, and you have nothing scored,—however many you have made by cards,—they will claim a treble: you should be prepared for this. The claim is wrong; but in spite of that—possibly because of it—"they all do it."

Law 7.—*Decision.*—You must call your honors audibly, but you are not obliged to yell because your adversaries are quarrelling.

Law 14.—Always get hold of the cards before cutting, and place a high card at one end of the pack, and a low one at the other; then cut last, and take either end card you prefer; by this means you select your partner. This is an admirable *coup*, and it tends to the greatest happiness of the greatest number (Note *, p. 8); but it must be executed with judgment, for if you are detected your happiness will not be increased—rather the reverse. Some purists, anxious to be on the safe side, only keep an eye on the bottom card, and take it when it suits them.

LAW 34.—Until the last few years, after you had cut the cards into two distinct packets, if the dealer thought fit to knock one of them over, leave a card on the table, or drop half a dozen or so about, it was a misdeal on the ground that these proceedings were opposed to one or other of the next two laws, 35 and 36; but the latest decision is, that the dealer can maltreat the pack in any way he likes, and as often as he likes, and compel you to keep on cutting *de die in diem.*

*Old Decision.*—"You cannot make your adversary cut a second time: when you left a card on the table, it could not be said that there was confusion in the cutting; it is a misdeal."

*New Decision.*—"There is nothing in the laws to make this a misdeal. The play comes under the term 'confusion of the cards, and there must be a fresh deal."

If you see a potent, grave, and reverend senior carefully lubricating his thumb with saliva, don't imagine he is preparing it for deglutition: he is only about to deal. Even if he should swallow it, why interfere? it is not your thumb. Should you suffer from acute hyperæsthesis, you can follow the example of an old friend of mine, who once rose from the table in his terror, and returned armed with a large pair of black-kid gloves, which he wore during the remainder of the *séance:* though the effect was funereal—not to say ghast-

ly,—it was attended with the best results in his case; but it is just as likely to lead to ill-feeling, and therefore to be deprecated.

Law 37.—An incorrect or imperfect pack is a pack containing duplicates, or more or less than fifty-two cards; but it is neither incorrect nor imperfect because you think fit to place any number of your own cards in the other pack, or to supplement them with one from it. *Vide* Laws 42, 46.

Law 42.—If you take *one* card from the other pack it is clear that you subject yourself to a penalty: if you take more than one, the matter is not so clear; possibly you may gain by it. Should you wish to have the point settled, any time you have a bad hand, add the other pack to it, then complain that you have sixty-five cards, throw them up, claim a new deal under Rule 37, and see what comes of it.

Law 45.—Taking up your cards during the deal has one advantage, that if you can get your hand sorted, and begin to play without waiting for the dealer, you save time, and time is reported to be money. To counterbalance this, there are two attendant disadvantages: you prevent the possibility of a misdeal, and any card exposed by your officiousness gives the dealer the option of a new deal.

Law 46.—Under this law it is manifest that—the other hands being correct—your hand may consist of

any number of cards from one to thirteen; and if you once play to a trick, however many you may be short, you will have to find them, or be responsible for them. See Law 70.

Law 91.—If this law, which is the main cause of inattention and innumerable improper intimations, was abolished, whist would be greatly improved.

The chapter on etiquette is good sense and good English, and is worthy of much more attention than is usually given to it.

In addition to their ambiguity, and sins of commission, there is also a sin of omission: there is no limit as to time, and it seems desirable there should be. I would suggest—as allowing the hesitating player reasonable latitude—one of those sand-glasses, supposed to be useful for boiling an egg: there is no sense in giving him time enough to addle his egg.

Though these laws appear more difficult of access than I had imagined, they are not the laws of which the only copy was destroyed by Moses: I have seen them myself in Clay, Cavendish, and "The Art of Practical Whist"; and if you are unable to get any of these works from Mudie's, there are two copies of each in the British Museum, Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury.

Before or after breakfast is the best time to play; then, if ever, the intellect is clear, the attention undis-

tracted: in the afternoon you are exhausted by the labors of the day, and your evenings should be devoted to the morrow's lessons or a quiet nap (not the round game of that ilk).

## LECTURE II.

### THE LEAD.

"Dux nobis opus est.

THE play of the entire hand often depends upon the very first card led, and the confidence your partner has that your lead is correct. Whatever, then, your original lead may be, let it be a true and—as far as you can make it so—a simple lead; never lead an equivocal card—that is, one which may denote either strength or weakness—if you can lead a card about which no mistake is possible.* With the original lead, follow the books, and lead your strongest suit! if you have nothing at all, do as little mischief as you can. In this pitiable condition, the head of a short suit—as a knave or a ten—is better than the lowest, or lowest but one, of five to the nine: your partner, when he sees the high card led, knows at once (assuming he knows anything) that he will have to save the game himself if it can be saved, and will take the necessary

* "It is highly necessary to be correct in leads." "Never lead a card without a reason, though a wrong one." "Be particularly cautious not to deceive your partner in his or your own leads."—MATHEWS.

steps to that end. Though there is ancient and modern authority for this,* I am perfectly aware it is heresy: I am also aware, and the reflection gives me quite as much pain as the heresy does, that leading a long weak suit *with a bad hand* and no cards of re-entry is a losing game. To lead your longest suit when you are neither likely to get the lead again, nor to make a trick in it if you did, is a short and easily remembered rule, but it is apt to bring its followers to grief: if I do so, I know perfectly well after the game is over I shall probably be left with the two long cards of that suit, or I may have an opportunity of discarding one or both of them before that crisis arrives, but this is not the slightest consolation to me.

While on the subject of heresy, I may as well refer to another lead which has a special orthodoxy of its

* "According to the play that we see, with great weakness the rule is rather to lead strengthening cards. For our own part, we should be inclined to say, "Lead from your long suit only when you are sufficiently strong to bring in that suit with the aid of a reasonable strength on the part of your partner."—*Westminster Papers.*

"When you have a moderate hand yourself, sacrifice it to your partner."—MATHEWS.

"With a bad hand, lead that suit which is least likely to injure your partner. Do not, therefore, lead from four or five small cards."—MAJOR A.

"A lead from a queen or knave and one small card is not objectionable, if you have a miserably weak hand: your queen or knave may be valuable to your partner."—CLAY.

Even Cavendish, unless "generally" is synonymous with "always," admits the expediency of occasionally leading a short suit: "the hand, however weak, must hold one suit of four cards, and this should *generally* be chosen.'

own. In all suits of four or more, containing no sequence, you either lead the lowest, or, if you wish particularly to exhibit your knowledge of the game, the lowest but one; but from king, knave, ten, etc., you lead the ten, and, if your object is a quiet life, you will continue to do so; if you want to make tricks, the advantage of the lead is not so clear; if the second player holds ace, queen, etc., or queen and another, you drive him into playing the queen, and so lose the trick, which, if you had led your lowest in usual way, you might not have done.

Against this you have the set-off, that by leading the ten you insure having the king-card of the suit in the third round; but such a lead presupposes your partner neither to have ace, queen nor nine: if his best card is below the nine: the tricks you will make will be like angel's visits, few and far between, whatever you lead; and why you should take such a desponding view of an unplayed suit, I am not aware. The advantage of opening a suit in which you hold tenace is not so great as to oblige you to handicap it by sending the town-crier round with a bell to proclaim what that tenace is: *late in the hand* it is often advisable to lead the knave.

N.B.—When you, second, third, or fourth player, have won the first trick, whatever you may think, you are *not* the original leader, and your lead then should be guided by your own hand. If it is a bad one you

are under no compulsion to open a suit at all ; one suit is already open, go on with that ; if it also is a bad one, one bad suit is a less evil than two bad suits, or opening a doubtful one in the dark. Return through strength up to declared weakness ; or, if it was your partner who led, why should you show a suit unless you hold a good sequence or strong trumps ?* Return his suit : yours will be led some time. Whatever you won the trick with, he is in a better position to defend himself, third player, than if he had to lead it again himself. Whenever you hold a suit with one honor in it, to lead that suit, if you can avoid it, is about the worse use you can make of it. Should you fail to see this, devote ten minutes—not when you are playing whist, but some wet half-holiday or quiet Sunday afternoon—to thinking the matter over. Even if you have a suit of king, queen to three, why not be quiet ? If anybody else opens the suit, you will probably make two tricks ; if you open it yourself, probably one : you can always do that ; but why you should go out of your way to lead a suit in which you hold four to the knave or five to the ten, is incomprehensible.

It is not generally known (or, if it is, it is never

* In returning your partner's lead, if you had originally three, you return the higher of the two remaining cards : in returning through your adversary's lead—if you hold the third best and another—play the small one, for your partner may hold the second best single, and they will fall together.

acted on, which comes to the same thing) that neither in the ninety-one laws of whist, nor in any of its numerous maxims, are you forbidden to play the third round of a suit, even though the best card is notoriously held by your opponent. It is a common delusion to fancy, that, when a suit is declared against you, you can prevent it making, by leading something else; you merely postpone the evil day, and do mischief in the interval.* With trumps declared against you, be especially careful how you open new suits: surely, when you have just succeeded in knocking your partner on the head in one suit, you might give him till the next hand to recover himself, instead of trying to assault him again the very next time you get the lead.†

Changing suits is one of the most constant annoyances you will have to contend against: queer temper, grumbling, logic, and so on, if sometimes a nuisance, are sometimes altogether absent; but the determination to open new suits for no apparent reason—unless a feeble desire on the part of your partner, to see how

* "It is less mischievous, generally, to lead a certain losing card, than to open a fresh suit in which you are very weak." — *What to Lead*, by CAM.

† As intelligent children you will perhaps be tempted to observe that all this is so self-evident, it is scarcely worth mentioning: at your immature time of life such a mistake is pardonable; but as you grow older you will find that a determination to open ragged suits in season and out of season — especially out — is one of the strongest impulses of our imperfect nature.

far the proceeding will injure you, can be called a reason — is chronic.

Never* lead a singleton unless you are strong enough in trumps to defeat any attempt either of your adversaries or your partner to get them out, in which case it might be as well to lead them yourself. Whether you lead a sneaker, or wait for others to play the suit, the chance of ruffing is much the same; and the certainty of making a false lead, and the nearly equal certainty of deceiving your partner, are avoided.

When a singleton comes off it may be nice, it is certainly naughty: when, on the other hand, you have killed your partner's king, and he has afterwards got the lead, drawn the trumps, and returned your suit, should the adversaries make four or five tricks in it, you must not be surprised if he gives vent to a few cursory remarks.†

With five trumps and no cards, lead a trump: you have made a true lead; you have led not merely your

* As defined by Capt. Corcoran, R.N.

† To succeed with a singleton, (1) your partner must win the first trick in the suit, (2) he must return it at once. (3) on your next opening another unknown suit, he must again win the trick; and the odds against these combined events coming off are something considerable. *Per contra*, he will probably be beaten on the very first round; and, even if he is not, it is extremely likely that he will either lead trumps —unless he is aware of your idiosyncrasy, when he will never know what to do — for what he imagines naturally is your strong suit, or open his own. At the same time, just as there are fagots, and fagots, so there are singletons and singletons; and a queen or knave is by no means such a villanous card as anything below a seven.

strongest suit, but a very strong suit; and, if your partner has nothing, you will lose the game, whatever you play, but you will lose it on that account, and not because you led a trump. If you open any of the plain suits, you have made a false lead, and it is two to one the adversaries hold any one of them against your partner doing so.*

With five trumps and other cards, *a fortiori* lead a trump.

Towards the end of the game, you will find it laid down by some authorities, that if you hold nothing, and have the original lead, you should lead your best trump. Now, if that trump is of sufficient size to warn your partner that it is your best, this lead may not, under the circumstances, be much more injurious than any other: but an original trump lead is usually supposed to indicate either great strength in trumps or in plain suits; and if your partner infers from the size of your trump, that your lead is from strength, and acting on that inference returns it, it is about the most murderous lead that can be made: having been two or three times the victim of such a lead as that, is almost as good a reason for not returning trumps, as sudden illness or not having one.

* You will often be told, by the very people who will tell you to lead from five small cards in a plain suit, that to lead a trump from five is too dangerous; but if you inquire in what way it is too dangerous and receive any satisfactory reply, you will succeed in doing what I have never done yet.

If he holds seven tricks in his own hand he can make them at any time; and any attempt of yours, however able, to deceive him at the outset will (to say the least of it) not assist him in doing so.

Why add an additional element of confusion to the game? Why should your partner have to say to himself, as well as "Strong cards or Strong trumps," "Perhaps nothing at all"? He is compelled to wait about to see what is the meaning of this lead: time is lost and an opportunity let slip which may never recur.*

As a general principle, with the original lead and a very bad hand, it is advisable to efface yourself as much as possible: in such a case, I always have a strong desire to get under the table; I don't know that it is contrary to either the laws or the etiquette of whist to do so, and I firmly believe it is a better course than leading the trey of trumps. At any rate, it is not for the weak hand to dictate how the game should be played; and to step boldly to the front, and lead a small trump for two, without a trick behind it, is in my opinion, the height of impertinence.

At certain states of the score it may be imperative, in order to save the game, that you should place all

* The bumblepuppist will observe here that time was made for slaves, but the apothegms on this subject are more numerous than he is aware of.

the remaining cards: but that is another matter altogether; and if you want to go into it, read Clay on the subject (p. 85), though he nowhere suggests that you should commence operations by placing thirty-eight unknown cards.

If your partner has led you a trump, and you—holding ace, queen, to four or more—have made the queen, return the ace; if you are playing bumble-puppy, return a small one: your partner, thinking the ace is against him, is almost certain to finesse and lose a trick; then call him names.*

With ace, king, only, it is customary to lead first the ace and then the king: there is no authority for such a lead,† and nothing to be gained by it, except that by leading in this way you probably prevent your partner from signalling in the suit; but, if you like to burden yourself with a useless anomaly, you can make a note of it (see p. 36). We started with the hypothesis, that in the ordinary course of nature, you have fifty years before you; and if you wish to imbitter and shorten those years, you will invariably lead the lowest but one of five: it may be, and I am informed is, useful among a few assorted players,

* The reason assigned by the perpetrator of this return is, that, as he originally held four, he is *compelled* to play the lowest, and it curiously exemplifies his inability to apply even the little knowledge he is possessed of.

† Peccavi! the lead is given in "What to Lead," by Cam.

"chock-full of science"; but it is caviare to the general,* and (unlike Wordsworth's Creature),—

"Too bright and good
For human nature's daily food." †

In bumblepuppy all this is entirely different; you can lead anything you like, in any way you like; here the safest lead is a long weak suit; ‡ the longer and

* Never give "the general" an opportunity for thinking if you can avoid it: this is a rule of *universal application*. "The opportunity to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done."

† It was introduced as "a proposed extension of principle;" but you had better stick to the old adage, "First catch your principle," and leave the extension of it to some future time. The theoretical advantages of this lead, and also the echo of the signal, you will find fully set forth in "Cavendish." In a letter to *The Field*, Sept. 27, 1879, he appears to advocate varying its monotony by occasionally leading the lowest but *two*. Another authority directs you to lead the lowest but one, only when you hold no honor in the suit.

With regard to the echo, I have no head for intricate mathematical calculations, and therefore am unable to tell you about what trick everything would be, ready; but, speaking roughly, I should be afraid that for all practical purposes the hand would occasionally be over before the signaller and the echoer had completed their preparations. In the "Art of Practical Whist" you are recommended to lead the lowest but two of six. (The advice of *Punch* to those about to marry is applicable here.)

Mr. F. H. Lewis, in *The Field*, January, 1880, has propounded a scheme for subdividing the echo into categories; and it has recently been pointed out to me, that by leading trumps in some irregular way —understood, I presume, by the inventor of the process—you can explain to your partner that you originally held four. "Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us." When all these improvements are in use, this is clear, the elect will return to that fine old practice known to our ancestors as "piping at whisk;" the rest of us to primeval chaos.

‡ ***With a weak partner***, strengthening cards are either futile or dan-

weaker it is, the less is your partner able to do you a mischief. You should also be very particular to lead the lowest but one of five :* it creates confusion, and under cover of that confusion you may make a trick or two. As to play false cards for the purpose of deceiving your partner is considered clever, a very little practice will enable you to play them with facility (with all deference to Bret Harte, for ways that are dark, the Heathen Chinee is *not* peculiar.) †

It is also usual with ace to five or more trumps to lead the ace, and if you see — by killing your partner's king, or by his failing to play one — that he has no more, to try something else.

You can also change the suit as often as you please: it is a fine mental exercise for your partner to recollect the remaining cards of four unfinished suits, all going simultaneously.

I often think, when I see this game in full blast, that whist-players are not sufficiently grateful to Charles

gerous: as he will in all probability at once disembowel himself, the result of leading them is on all-fours with the Japanese Hari Kari.

* "What with the ifs and the mystification that would occur from playing the cards in this erratic manner, we should do more to injure than improve the play *in the present state of whist science.*" —*Westminster Papers.* [The Italics are mine.]

† The ability to play false cards is not a proof of intelligence. "Cunning is often associated with a low type of intellect." — *Report of Inspector-General of Military Prisons.*) If you read your natural history, you will find it is the weaker animals which betake themselves to anomalousmodes of defence; though the cuttle-fish and the skunk may be much looked up to in their respective domestic circles, they are quite out of place at the whist table.

the Sixth, or whatever other lunatic invented playing cards, for having limited himself to four suits: he might have devised six — but the idea is too horrible.*

* "In the time of Charles the Sixth there were five suits." — *Field*, Jan. 17, 1880. This not only proves my ignorance, but my position; for if five suits have been tried, and found too much for human endurance, then six would manifestly have been quite too awful! *Q.E.D.*

## LECTURE III.

### THE PLAY OF THE SECOND, THIRD, AND FOURTH HAND.

"The play is the thing,"—SHAKSPEARE.

SECOND hand with king and another, or queen and another, never play the honor either in trumps or plain suits, unless you particularly want the lead; and then you will probably not get it, and throw away a trick.

By not playing the honor,—

(1) The chance of making it is greater (this has been proved to demonstration by Mogul.)

(2) The possible weakness of the third hand is exposed, — a very important point.

(3) Your own weakness is concealed from the leader, and he is unable to finesse against your partner.

These three reasons ought to be tolerably conclusive; but, if a high card is led, head it!

If, holding knave, ten, and another, you are afraid of trumps being led, and your partner is devoid of

common sense, don't play the ten, or it will be taken for a signal) that it neither is one, nor at all like one, does not affect the petrolater in the least): it is almost equally dangerous with queen, knave, and another, to play the knave.*

Except to save or win the game, whether you are weak in trumps, or strong, don't ruff a doubtful card unless you have a distinct idea what to do next: if you are only going to open a weak suit, let it go.

Don't ruff a suit of which your partner clearly holds the best, in order to announce, *urbi et orbi* that you are weak in trumps: depend upon it *urbis* and *orbis* will take advantage of this, not to mention that you take the lead out of your partner's hand at a critical moment, and prevent his developing any game he may have.

In bumblepuppy, with ace, king, and others, or king, queen, and others, the trick is often passed; and with knave led, if the second player holds ace, queen, etc., he usually plays the queen: † holding the same cards,

* A high card second hand has exactly the same effect on many players as a red rag on a bull; and, if you have an objection to being gored, you should keep it out of their sight as long as possible — subject to this important qualification, "Put an honor, on an honor with only three of a suit; with four or more you should not do it."—MATHEWS.

† "With ace, queen, etc., of a suit, of which your right-hand adversary leads the knave, put on the ace invariably. No good player with king, knave, ten, will begin with the knave: of course it is finessing against yourself to put on the queen, and as the king is certainly behind you, you give away at least the lead, without any possible advantage.' —MATHEWS.

if instead of the knave a small card is led, he occasionally produces the ace. These proceedings may be the eccentricities of genius: if they are not, the only other reasonable motive I can suggest for them is a desire to lose a trick.

Third hand: Don't finesse against your partner, unless you have reason to believe you are stronger in his own suit than he is, or that he has led from weakness.

Don't finesse against yourself. If you have led from ace, knave, etc., and your partner has made the queen, the king is certainly not on your right. If, on the other hand, you have led from king, and your partner again has made the queen, it can be of no use to put on the king: the ace must be over you. Though Clay described the finesse obligatory before you were thought of, I am afraid that after you are forgotten, these simple cases will continue to be reversed,—that people will finesse against, and not for, themselves. (Note *, p. 21.) In bumblepuppy this is *de rigueur*; also at this game, with king, queen,

This advice as a rule is sound: but you must bear in mind, that, towards the end of a hand, the knave is often led from king, knave, ten or king, knave, alone; and if you, holding ace, queen, are obliged to make two tricks in the suit, you will have to play the queen. If the king is held by your left hand adversary, you will lose the game, whatever you play. When you play the queen under these circumstances, and it comes off, don't imagine that you are inspired, or preternaturally intelligent: you are only playing to the score; and you will find that most instances of irregular play, which at first sight suggest inspiration, resolve themselves into this.

and another in your partner's lead, it is customary to play the king, and, if it wins, to open a new suit.

Ruff a winning card of the adversaries! What possible benefit can you derive from allowing your opponent to discard, and by the discard show his partner the suit he wishes led? If you are too stingy to use a high trump, surely you might play a little one, just to keep the trick going.*

When your partner has opened a suit with the ace, and on the third round eleven are out, he holds the other two; and whenever he leads one of them—whether it is the queen or the four—it is a winning card. But if you fail to grasp this, and feel disposed to play the thirteenth trump on it, don't waste time either in invoking the immortal gods, inspecting the last trick, or looking preternaturally intelligent: trump it at once, and put him out of his misery. The idea is not new, for it occurred to Macbeth when about to perpetrate the very same *coup*:—

> "If 'twere done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
> It were done quickly."

My only claim is to have expressed myself without such an involved use of auxiliary verbs.

If you have more than two of the suit, don't play for the ace on your partner's knave; it may be a short suit, or the head of a sequence, and you throw away the power of passing the ten second round: even if

* "It is much better to play a small trump with the certainty it will be overtrumped, than to let the trick go."—*Westminster Papers.*

it is from king, queen, knave, to five, there is nothing to be gained by covering ; with ace and another, win the trick, and return it at once, unless you lead trumps.

Though frequently done, it is not good whist to decline to win a trick, either on the ground that you want a guard for your king of trumps, or because you hold six. In the other game both these proceedings would be correct.

Fourth hand : Win the trick, and endeavor if possible to do so without playing a false card. Like all things that are difficult at first, you will find it become comparatively easy by practice. You might suppose that the exponent of bubblepuppy — who always considers a trick of his own making worth at least two made by his partner—would get into no difficulty here ; but he does. He has a firmly rooted belief that his strong suits are under the protection of a special Providence, which will never allow them to be ruffed ; and uttering his wretched shibboleth, "Play my ace, sir ? never ! " he contrives to lose any number of tricks by keeping up his winning cards to the last possible moment, and a shade longer. I imagine he is under the erroneous impression that this in some way compensates for cutting in with a small trump when he is not wanted.*

* "It is a good plan, when you have the thirteenth trump, to pass winning cards, The reason of this is not apparent ; but in practice I know several players who do so, and in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom."—*Westminster Papers.*

## LECTURE IV.

### DISCARDING, AND ITS DIFFICULTIES.

"This the vain purpose of his life to try,—
Still to explore what still eludes his eye."

DISCARDS are of two distinct kinds:—

(1) Ordinary.

(2) Forced.

(1) when your partner, (2) when your adversary, shows strength.

In the first case, you naturally point out to your partner which is your strong suit by discarding from your weak suits, your object being to win the game; and there is an end of that matter.* In the second case it is just the reverse: your discard from your

* In ordinary discarding, your strong suit is your long suit: except to deceive your partner, it can be no use to discard from four or five small cards. in one suit, in order to keep king to three in another.

*best guarded suit*, by no means necessarily your strongest ; with a view, as far as you can, of blocking every suit, and so preventing the adversary from establishing his long cards.

These two kinds of discards are, or ought to be, of importance to three very different classes of players :—

(1) The scientific.

(2) The commonly decent.

(5) The exponents of bumblepuppy.

(1) *The Scien tic.*—Here, with trumps declared against you, you discard, as already said, from your best guarded suit. Your partner knows this is probable, but he does not know how strong you are in that suit ; he also knows it may very possibly be a suit in which you hold three small cards ; and a second discard of it only gives him the further information that you had either three or five—*he must infer from his own hand which :* he assumes you did not originally hold two, for you would not have left yourself entirely bare of the suit.*

Among good players, then, the forced discard amounts to this : that though you are aware your partner is discarding with the best possible motives, and he is aware that you are doing the same, neither can depend upon the other's discard as showing anything

* It is not everybody who is in the proud position I was once, when a trump being led by the adversary, I found myself with no trump, the best nine cards of one suit, and two other aces.

for certain. With trumps declared against you, you must place unknown cards to the best of your ability; and in such an unpleasant conjuncture, if you are exceptionally fortunate, you may sometimes save the game, and the skill displayed in doing so may be a joy forever :—

"Forsan et hæc olim meminisse jubavit." *

But when, on the other hand, you look at the improbability of this coming off; when you reflect that your partner has occasionally given you two discards, and that you, in the exercise of that right of private judgment inherent in every Protestant, led one of those very suits, and by doing so lost the game; when you recall what then took place, the *epea pteroenta*, the mutual— But the subject is too painful: let us leave it, and pass on to

*Class* 2. † This class has two divisions: they both see your discards, but—without any reference to their own hands or anything that has been played—one division assumes your discard is invariably from weakness, and at once knocks on the head the very suit

* Observe the discretion of the poet in his choice of the word "forsan."

† If there are a "few words" going about, and you are not concerned, don't put your oar in.

"They who in quarrels interpose
Must often wipe a bloody nose."

you have sedulously been attempting to guard ; the other has got hold of the pernicious axiom that the original discard is necessarily your *strongest* suit, and always leads that.

Here we have again a pretty considerable element of confusion.

*Class* 3.—These, with an unerring instinct that might almost be taken for genius,* will put you in a hole, whatever you do. The safest plan is, under all circumstances, to discard from your weakest suit : you cannot be cut to pieces there ; and, whatever happens, you may have the letter of the law on your side. When you have not followed suit to the second round of the opponent's trumps, when, as a rule, your discard is of no importance to them, this is the only time they ever see it.† The number of times they will have that wretched trick turned, and their anxiety to be quite sure of the suit, are painful to the sensitive mind (especially if that sensitive mind is sitting opposite to them, and happens to belong to yourself). Well might Sophocles observe, "Many things are dreadful, but nothing is more dreadful than man."

* Genius has been defined to be "an unlimited capacity for taking pains," and the pains they will take to circumvent you are assuredly unlimited ; but their capacity for anything is so doubtful, that their claim to genius on this score must be left in abeyance.

† Having no winning cards in their own hands to attract their attention, they are able to devote a little time to seeing the cards on the table.

That the first discard is from the weakest suit, is one of those half-dozen cast-iron rules—three of them wrong, and the remainder invariably misapplied—which make up their stock-in-trade ; * but if they hold ace, king, queen, to five trumps,—say clubs,—you see them come well up to the table with an air of triumph, and begin to lead. Again you don't follow suit : what do they care? they drive gayly on ; but, as they finish the third round, the idea just begins to dawn upon them,—perhaps you have discarded something.† A careful inspection of the last trick affords them the pleasing intelligence that somebody has discarded a diamond, and somebody else a spade : the light fades from their eye, their jaw drops, and they are such a picture of hopeless misery, that if they were not in the habit of informing you—scores of times a day—that they play whist only for amusement, you might almost doubt the fact.‡

* The excitement of the moment has led me into exaggeration here. Let me give the bumblepuppist his due; the exact number is ten, as you will find later on.

† The strong hand is leading trumps, and he gets them all out, and has the lead ; nine times out of ten he will have forgotten his partner's first discard, and play on the assumptfon his last discard is his first; and so certain is this to come about, that, we believe with some players, it is best to endeavor to calculate how many discards we shall get, and let the last discard be our weakest suit."—*Westminster Papers.*

‡ If they were slightly to vary this statement, and say they pitched thirteen cards about only for their own amusement, the position would be much more inexpugnable.

Unless my memory deceives me, in "The Whist Player," by Col.

After prolonged contemplation of the chandelier, and a farewell look at the spade and diamond, they eventually produce a heart,—your original discard!—have their remaining trumps drawn, and lose the game.

Ordinary discards are simple in the extreme, and might be very useful; unfortunately (as the general public will persist in confining its attention to its own hand, as long as there is anything in it), the only discard usually seen is the last, and this detracts from their utility. Forced discards are always difficult (not to the discarder, but his partner), and to a duffer unintelligible, for this reason: they require common-sense. Far be it from me to teach it,—it is like poetry, "*nascitur non fit*;" and these remarks have not been made with any such intention, but to endeavor to accentuate that Cavendish in his treatise on whist, and a letter which I append, has said everything on the subject likely to be of use.

Blyth, they are recommended to confine themselves to playing "Beggar my Neighbor" with their grandmothers. As most of those ladies must in the ordinary course of nature have gone over to the majority, this would be hard on them; but they might adopt a middle course, and play that fascinating game with each other; they could pitch the cards about equally well, and would have more cards to pitch. I shall resume this topic at the close of this lecture.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF DISCARDING.

"The old system of discarding, though unscientific, had at least the merit of extreme simplicity. It was just this: when not able to follow suit, let your first discard be from the weakest suit. Your partner in his subsequent leads is thus directed to your strong suit, and will refrain from leading the suit in which, by your original discard, you have told him you are weak.*

"Several years ago some whist enthusiasts, amongst whom were Mogul and myself, played a number of experimental rubbers; the cards of each hand being recorded as they were played, and the play being fully discussed afterwards.

"In the course of the discussion it was observed first, I think, by Mogul, that in several hands the discard from a weak suit, when the adversaries had evidently in their hands the command of trumps, had resulted very disastrously.† This caused us to consider

* Will he?

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

And you can hope anything you like, if you don't mind the subsequent disappointment. First he has to see it; and after you have got over that difficulty, if he only holds two small cards in that suit, and has a tenace in the other,—according to my experience,—he will lead his own.

† Absorbed in their discoveries, they appear to have forgotten that "*vixerunt fortes ante Agamemnona.*"

"If weak in trumps, keep guard on your adversary's suits. If strong, throw away from them."—MATTHEWS.

whether the weak suit should not be protected under these circumstances; and we finally came to the conclusion that discards should be divided into two classes, viz., ordinary discards and forced discards. These I proceed to distinguish.

"The reason a weak suit is chosen for the discard is, that, when a strong suit is broken into, the number of long cards, which might be brought in if the suit is ever established, are lessened, and so many potential tricks are consequently lost.

"But little harm, certainly none of this kind of harm, is done by throwing away from a weak suit; in other words, from a suit that can never be brought in. But when the adversaries have declared great strength in trumps, the chance of bringing in a suit is reduced to a minimum. The small cards of your long suit are valueless to you, on the assumption that you can never bring it in. That suit will protect itself so far as its high cards are concerned, but the weak suits require protection.

"Thus, by guarding honors, or by keeping four cards to a ten or nine, a trick is often won, or the establishment of an adverse suit prevented. It was this point, indeed, which first led us to condemn the invariable weak suit discard: the remark was frequently made, 'I was obliged to deceive you then, partner, and to throw my long suit in order to keep

my king guarded in another suit.' This, of course, when the game was in danger.

"Honors in weak suits may be freely unguarded by the players who have strong trump hands, but the guards should be religiously preserved by those who are weak. Our discussions resulted in our laying down the following rules for our own guidance: viz., *when you see from the fall of the cards that there is no probability of bringing in your own or your partner's long suit, discard originally from your best protected suit.* This I may call the foundation of the modern system of discarding: it has been adopted by all the best players with whom I am acquainted.

"For the sake of having a short and easily remembered rule, however it is the fashion to say, 'Discard originally from your strong suit when the adversaries lead trumps.'* No doubt you will be right in your discard in most cases, but this aphorism does not

* That young and curly period, when I was influenced by the fashions, has passed away. *Eheu fugaces*, etc. It may be easier to remember "strong" than "best protected,"—one epithet is certainly three syllables shorter than the other; but it seems a pity, for the sake of those three syllables, to use an expression which is utterly misleading.

In "The Art of Practical Whist," also, "strongest" is used without any qualification whatever. Although the Commination Service is seldom read now,—even if, like Royal Oak Day and Herr Von Joel, it should cease altogether to be retained by the Establishment,—to make the blind man go out of his way would still be inexpedient, unless you make him go out of your own way as well, for you may cut him for a partner; if you have no respect for the blind, surely you have some regard for your pocket-money.

truly express the conditions. [Query, then why use it?] . . . The conclusion I have arrived at is, that the modern system of discarding requires so much judgment in its application as to be rather a stumbling-block than an assistance to the ordinary run of players [rough on the neophyte!] This is a pity, as there can be no doubt that the classing of discards into ordinary and forced is sound in principle, and adds beauty to the game. I have been prompted to write this letter in the hopes of seeing this classification more generally adopted, and its limitations more distinctly observed and acted on."—CAVENDISH.

I have met with the same conclusion and the same regret in a metrical form: it is short, and may be useful to any of you troubled with bad memories:—

"'If seven maids, with seven mops,
Swept it for a half a year,
Do you suppose,' the walrus said,
'That they could get it clear?'
'*I doubt it*,' said the carpenter,
*And shed a bitter tear*."

[Resumption of Note ‡, p. 38.]

## PLAYING FOR AMUSEMENT.

If this principle were carried out to its logical result, and everybody played for amusement in the ludicrous sense in which this word is generally understood, it is manifest that—as no one would ever see

either a card led or played, or know what suit was trumps—it would be useless continuing to ask each other for information on those abstruse points; and unless, by some alteration in the laws of whist, an intelligence department outside the table was provided to supplement the precarious knowledge acquired by looking at the last trick, the game would shortly collapse from its innate absurdity. Unfortunately we seldom arrive at this point: what usually takes place is this:—

Four people sit down nominally to play whist, when suddenly one of them announces, to the consternation of his partner, that he is not there with any such intention, but solely for his own amusement: he altogether ignores the possibility of the others wishing to play whist for their amusement, and lays down his stale proposition with such an air of originality, that he often deludes the unwary bystander into the belief that he is somehow superhuman, and much superior to the other three, who are consequently looked down upon as mean and sordid individuals. This is not the case. If yelling when he is trodden upon, and crying if he loses, are proofs of humanity, he is essentially human.

Now, no one has the slightest objection to your amusing yourself as long as you do not annoy anybody else. I go farther than this, and admit your abstract right to amuse yourself at your partner's ex-

pense; but I protest against your expecting him to rejoice with you in his own discomfiture.

Because eels are accustomed to being skinned, it does not at all follow that they should like it: at any rate, whether they do so or not, it is not expected of them.

Again, the practice of vivisection may be both amusing and instructive to the vivisector, while it may be neither one nor the other to his victim. Though I have no practical acquaintance with this pursuit, I have often seen large portraits of the vivisectee pasted on hoardings; and judging from the expression of his countenance, and the uncomfortable position in which he is always depicted, I should imagine the entire proceedings were supremely distasteful to him.

From the time when Cain was short-coated, and tipcats, pea-shooters, catapults, and other instruments of torture, appeared on the scene, there have been peculiar ideas of amusement. Fortunately — with the exception of your doting mammas — public opinion has been against you: a gentleman found in the street with a tipcat imbedded in his eye is usually conducted to the nearest chemist, and the malefactor given in charge. (The crafty Ulysses, before he performed a very similar operation on Polyphemus, made every preparation to escape from the room as soon as it was over, and took uncommonly good care not to originate the

now trite witticism, "There you go with your eye out," till he was well beyond his reach: he was far too intelligent a man to expect the Cyclops to take it pleasantly.) But if this occurs at whist, and the victim even hints an objection, he is looked upon as a bear; and sometimes the verdict is, "Served him right," while at other times he seems to be expected to "rub it in." There I draw the line: annoy your partner as much as you like, but don't expect that! It is contrary to nature. Still, while fully and freely admitting your right of annoyance, and also your right to throw away your own property if you please, you are not privileged to treat your partner's in the same way: this borders closely on theft; and before taking such a liberty, in order to be on the safe side, I think first you ought to obtain his consent in writing. It is all very well for Shakspeare to call his purse trash (he knew its contents, and his description may have been most accurate); but whether things are trash, or not, if they don't belong to you, you must not make away with them (as the poet himself experienced when he took to deer-stealing). And unless you wish, like him, to fall into the clutches of the criminal law, you had better take Captain Cuttle's advice, and overhaul your catechism, with special reference to your duty to your neighbor: you will find it a safer guide.

I ought to apologize for the length of this note: but

I have suffered, myself; and though I never killed an albatross, and am by nature most inoffensive, —

> "Since then at an uncertain hour
> That agony returns,
> And till my ghastly tale is told
> The heart within me burns."

## LECTURE V.

### THE PETER AND ITS PECULIARITIES.

"Petrus nimium admiratur se."—*Eton Grammar*

SOME years ago a simple piece of mechanism, to which somehow or other very undue importance has been attached, was introduced to the whist world: you play a higher card before a lower one—unnecessarily—to indicate that you hold good trumps, and *want them out.**

You can want this for two reasons :—

(1) Because you have the seven best trumps. There is no objection to your signalling here, though it is quite uncalled for : if you have the game in your own hand, you can either lead the lowest but two of six, stand on your head, or execute any other—what it is the odd fashion to call—convention the authority of the day may think fit to invent, as long as you do not come into collision with Law 5.†

* The origin of the signal is as clear as mud; and the very name of the inventor of the well known dodge of playing an unnecessarily high card to induce the opponents to lead him a trump, is lost in the mists of antiquity.

† People do not seem at all agreed what a convention is. I used

(2) Because you have a good trump hand, and the fall of the cards shows that unless you get them out, your or your partner's winning cards will be ruffed. Here is a good legitimate reason; but when everything is going nicely, and your partner making the tricks, that you should interfere with this merely because you have five trumps,—or nine, for the matter of that,—is the height of absurdity. It may be an interesting fact for him to know, on the second round of a plain suit, that you hold five trumps, just as there are numerous other interesting facts which he may also ascertain at the same time,—e.g., that you have led a singleton, that you hold no honor in your own suit, and so on; but none of them justifies him in ruining his own hand, and devoting his best trump to destruction.

You ought to understand the signaller to say, "Get

to be under the impression, myself, that it was an assembly of notables,—a sort of liberal four hundred, or what I believe is called in America a caucus. It is described by Childe Harold as a dwarfish demon that foiled the knights in Marialva's dome; while I find in *The Fortnightly Review*, April, 1879, "Conventions are certain modes of play established by preconcerted arrangement." By whom established, preconcerted, or arranged, is not mentioned; and I am very much afraid that this definition leaves a loop-hole for winking at your partner when you want trumps led,—of course, "by preconcerted arrangement,"—otherwise it would be unfair and (as he might mistake it for a nervous affection of the eyelid) absurd. At whist you can call anybody and anything whatever you please; poets (also an irritable race) have the same license; and for general purposes, according to Mr. Squeers, there is no Act of Parliament against your calling a house an island; but when you come to definitions, you must be more particular, or you will land in a hole.

the lead at any cost the first moment you can, play your highest trump, and you shall see something remarkable." *

When you find, as the result of your efforts, that that promised something is not uncommonly the loss of the rubber, though it will be a shock to you at first, you will soon get accustomed to it.

It is even a dangerous practice to signal when the adversaries will most likely have the lead on its completion: they at once adapt their play to the circumstances. I have seen innumerable games not won, and many a game lost, by absurd signalling. Still, whist-players suffering from Peter on the brain constantly refuse to ruff a winning card in order to disclose a signal in the discard: if they wanted trumps led, it occurs to the ordinary mind that the simplest plan would be to win the trick and lead them; and, as they decline to do so, the only conclusion is, that they regard signalling for the mere sake of signalling to be in itself so noble an end, that to attain it, it is worth while to announce to their opponents that they had better save the game at once, and at the same

* It is only right that I should state here that these are not modern opinions; they are the opinions of Clay, and I am informed he is rapidly becoming obsolete. This may be the case. I know the practice of numbers who call themselves whist-players is entirely opposed to his theory, still, though I don't like to prophesy (having a high respect for the proverb that it is dangerous to do so unless you know), I am open to make a small bet that the Peter is obsolete first.

time to present them with at least one trick towards it.*

If you only want the odd trick, signalling is about the safest way to miss it. Any two decent players would, in a vast majority of cases, get on exactly as well if the Peter had never been invented; while two bad players—assuming that they can possibly miss the game with all the trumps—generally do so by its assistance.† Where it would be useful is when, with moderate strength in trumps, and the cards declared in your favor, you want trumps led at all hazards. Unfortunately, if, at such a crisis as this,

* I have seen a *player* signal twice consecutively, and lose a treble each hand.

"O scene surpassing fable, and yet true!"

With the score three all, I have seen the original leader—holding ace, knave, nine, to five trumps, and the ten turned up—play a singleton, knock his partner's king on the head, and then begin to signal, while the adversaries were making the next two tricks in that very suit; his partner ruffed the fourth, and, with king and queen of the two unopened suits, led the queen of trumps, killed the king in the second hand; and the signaller then proceeded to wait about, and, with all the remaining trumps on his right, eventually lost three by cards.

I have seen another *player* of many years' standing, first lead a plain suit and then call; his partner echoed it, and they lost four by cards. And I *have been told* that some time after the table had broken up, and three of the party had left the house, one of the club servants, entering the card-room, found the fourth still sitting at the table, and continuing to signal.

† "We do not know whether any one has ever kept a record of the number of tricks lost by Petering. During the past year, in the whist we have witnessed, we feel confident that more tricks have been lost than won by this practice."—*Westminster Papers.*

your partner is not equal to leading them without a call, he is certain not to see it, although he is missing all the other points of the game in what he calls looking for it. This looking for a Peter is an oddly named and peculiar form of amusement, appertaining not only to bumblepuppy but also to whist. Among all those people who have attended the University Boat Race during the last half-century, I apprehend not one went to look for it: they went to see it. And just as you would see that race, so you should see the signal. Never look *for* it! look *at* it! It is just as obvious as any other circumstance that occurs in the play: instead of this, after much looking, it is generally overlooked altogether.*

"Spectatum veniunt. veniunt spectentur ut ipsæ,"
("They come to look, and end by making spectacles of themselves.")

If you must look for it, at any rate don't look for it in the last trick: you would scarcely look for the boat-race as you were going to church the next day. Still Cowper—though he clearly disapproves of the signal and calls it senseless—seems, if he is to be annoyed with it, to advocate this:

"'Tis well if looked for at so late a day
In the last scene of such a senseless play."

* "They are looking for Peters and for the lowest but one; but they never think of the real points of the game."

'They are always on the lookout for it, and they spend more time and trouble about the signal than about all the rest of the play."—*Westminster Papers.*

What the signal for trumps ought to be, and what strength in trumps justifies a signal, are clearly laid down by Clay.

If you see a call, and hold the ace and any number of trumps, play the ace,—there can be no danger of dropping your partner's king,—and, if you had originally more than three, continue with the lowest; but if you are quite sure that leading trumps is the only way to miss or lose the game, don't lead them at all. This important fact is too much lost sight of, that the object of whist is not so much to lead the lowest but one of five, or to signal, as to win the game: these and other fads may or may not be the means to that end, but the end itself they are emphatically not. In their inception, at any rate, they were intended to be your instruments: don't let this position be reversed; whether, like fire, they are always good servants, may be open to argument, but their resemblance in the other respect is perfect.

One aspect of signalling has been overlooked in all the treatises on whist. I have seen a player of great common-sense and acute observation signal with three small trumps and a short suit, and by this means induce his watchful opponents to force him to make them all. I do not recommend such devious courses to you: even if they are lawful in a Christian country (of which I have doubts), they are only practicable when you are playing very good whist; and, this, as

Clay says, can only be the case when you thoroughly know your men.

Hair-splitting about the legitimacy of the Peter is beyond the scope of these remarks; but when Professor Pole—who appears to have been acquainted with the present mode of signalling for forty years (*Fortnightly Review*, April, 1879), and for nine has advised *learners* with five trumps *always* to ask for them ("Theory of Whist, p. 65)—begins at this eleventh hour to find fault with the practice, and to have his suspicions that it is immoral,—this is the Gracchi complaining of sedition with a vengeance.

> "A merciful Providence fashioned him holler,
> A purpose that he might his principles swaller."

In this year of grace, good players have long known that signalling is by no means an unmixed benefit, but rather an edge-tool dangerous to play with,* while it has been so long rampant that it has permeated the very lowest strata. If at such a time as this—when all the tenth-rate whist-players in Christendom and Jewry not only think they know all about it, but consider it in itself the quintessence of science; when many of them, by constant practice, have actually acquired such skill that their hesitation in playing

* Even in board schools, forcing the strong hand is a part of the ordinary curriculum.

"Always force the strong."—MATHEWS.

There used to be some difficulty in ascertaining which was the strong trump hand, but the signal has done away with that.

first a ten and then a deuce is something scarcely perceptible—the professor imagines that any words of his can put a stop to it, his courage is only equalled by that of the well-known Mrs. Partington with her mop. A child may start an avalanche, but once started it runs its appointed course.

In bumblepuppy the proceedings are so complicated and peculiar, they must be seen to be appreciated; but there are four common forms you should be acquainted with.

1. After you have had a lead or two, and got rid of your winning cards, you can begin signalling for somebody to lead a trump: * if somebody obliges you, and you win the trick, lead another suit, and wait till somebody else leads trumps again—continuing to signal in the intervals.

2. You can signal in your own lead, and I don't know that there is any objection to your expecting that your partner will attend to it—assuming he ever comprehends what you are driving at.

3. You can signal without any trump at all.

4. You can signal without intending to do so.*

* "Many times this kind of signal comes after the player has had the lead, and when nothing of importance, speaking from our own knowledge, has taken place to justify a signal. We are very careless about leading trumps when our partner has had the chance, and did not lead them."

"It is a sign of weak play if you first lead out your winning cards and then lead trumps: it shows ignorance of the principles of the

## LECTURE VI.

### FALSE CARDS, LOGIC, LUCK.

"And shall we turn our fangs and claws
Upon our own selves without cause?
For what design, what interest,
Can beast have to encounter beast."—*Hudibras.*

THERE are three kinds of false cards:—

(1) Those that deceive everybody;

(2) Those that deceive your opponents only;

(3) Those that deceive your partner only. And a sparing use of the two first—especially towards the

game. If it was advisable to lead trumps at all, it should be done before you led out your winning cards."—*Westminister Papers.*

These are noble sentiments. How any sane human being can imagine he has the right to tell me to destroy my hand and do for him—after he has drawn his own teeth—what he was afraid, before the operation, to do for himself, I have never been able to understand.

* To obviate the evident disadvantages and mutual recriminations which might ensue from such vagaries, if you really intend to signal, it is usual to take the following precautions;—

1. Always signal with your highest card.

2. Pause before you play it.

3. Put it down not only with emphasis, but in a special corner of the table mutually agreed upon beforehand. (Note †, p. 48.)

4. As soon as the trick is turned, ask to see it. (See note to Law 91.)

end of a hand—is often advantageous: * the third is sacred to bumblepuppy.

One thing is very certain,—that the original leader is never justified in playing a false card. (Note *, p. 17.)

Clay's conclusion does not altogether harmonize with his premises,—a very unusual circumstance with him; for after objecting strongly to false cards on high moral grounds, and prefacing his remarks by the expression of a touching belief that in no other position of life would anybody tell him what is untrue, he ultimately arrives at the delicious *non sequitur*, that if your partner is very bad or holds miserably weak cards, or towards the end of a hand, you may often play a false card with advantage. Why you should do what you know to be wrong because another person is bad or weak, or because you hold four cards and not thirteen, or even because such nefarious conduct may benefit yourself, he does not explain; and, in default of that explanation, he appears stronger as a whist-player than a moralist. But the logic of whist is a thing *per se*, utterly dissimilar to any known form of argument: * it finds

* "When it is evident the winning cards are betwixt you and your adversaries, play an obscure game; but as clear a one as possible if your partner has a good hand."—MATHEWS.

* The defence is quite as singular as the attack. For instance, if you should ever be taken to task for any alleged criminality arising from defective vision, instead of making either of the obvious answers that it never took place at all, or that you regret it escaped your

vent in such syllogisms as, "You ought to have known I had all the spades, I led a diamond;" or, "I must have the entire suit of clubs, I discarded the deuce." Though the usual reply is, "The deuce you did, this is merely paltering with a serious subject: the only effective argument is to throw something at the speaker's head,—the *argumentum ad hominem* (of course this would create more or less unpleasantness at first, but the speaker would soon find his level if you hit him hard enough). "Unfortunately this discipline, by which such persons were put to open penance and punished in this world,—that others admonished by their example might be afraid to offend,"—has fallen into desuetude: until the said discipline be restored again, which—although it is much to be wished *—can never be until the present reprehensible practice of screwing candlesticks, match-boxes, and all reasonable missiles into the table, be done away with, you have two courses open to you :—

(1) You can give an evasive answer; †

notice, and will endeavor to keep a better lookout in future, the ordinary plea in extenuation is "the noise in the room"; "because your cards are so bad," is often assigned as a satisfactory reason.

* Even a few days of this discipline at the beginning of Lent would be better than nothing.

† Evasive answers are of two kinds: those

(1) For the ordinary platitude, of which you will find good examples in "Card-Table Talk."

(2) For the blatant absurdity: these are more difficult; for, while modestly asserting your own individuality, you must at the same time guard against

(2 You can pretend to be deaf: this is a capital plan, as it gives you the option either of being unaware anybody spoke, or of totally misunderstanding him.* There is an utter inability to see that any question can possibly have two sides, evidenced by such remarks as, "My finesse was justifiable, yours was bad play." † The two prepositions, *post* and *propter*, are constantly confounded together: it seems to be thought, that, because they both govern the accusative case, their meaning is identical, or, to speak more accurately, convertible.

But you must be prepared to contend against other things besides false cards and curious logic. There is a fiend often reported to be present in the card-room, known by the name of "Luck;" and you ought to be acquainted with two of the common stratagems for circumventing him. It is by no means un-

"Heating a furnace for your foe so hot,
That you do singe yourself."

The following remark admirably fulfils both these conditions:—"'For the matter of that,' said Col. Quagg, 'Rot!'"—SALA.

It should be addressed, kindly but firmly, to a point about eighteen inches above your partner's head.

* A well-known whist-player who is really deaf is reported to aver that he never knew what comfort was till that misfortune befell him.

† Bad play is any kind of solecism perpetrated by somebody else: if by yourself it may either be just your luck, *pardonable* inattention, playing too quickly, drawing the wrong card, or—in a very extreme case—carelessness; but it is never bad play. Sometimes the differance is even greater than this; and what would be bad play in another, in yourself may be the acme of skill.

usual to see two obese elderly persons,—who have just lost a rubber by revoking, ruffing each other's winning cards with the thirteenth trump, forgetting to score honors, *et id genus omne*,—after first roundly anathematizing his malefic spirit, taking precautions against such things happening again by slowly and painfully rising from their respective chairs, and, at great personal inconvenience, changing places with each other: this is one way; another is to throw away several additional shillings in the purchase of new cards; turning your chair round, and sitting down again, is also supposed to have an emolient tendency.

That there is such a thing,—though stupidity is often mistaken for it,—is, to my mind, as undoubted as that there are birds; but whether one or the other is to be caught by putting salt on its tail, without taking other precautions, must be left to that right of private judgment already mentioned (p. 32).

It is true the Swan of Avon sings,—

> "Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
> Which we ascribe to Heaven."

But he was only a literary person, not a whist-player; and if a careful exercise of your judgment satisfies you that either new cards, or wearing out the seat of your knickerbockers by dodging from chair to chair, is a specific for want of memory and attention, so let it be: whatever conclusion you arrive at, it is your duty to respect your seniors.

## LECTURE VII.

### WHIST AS AN INVESTMENT.

"None alive can truly tell
What fortune they must see.—SEDLEY."

IN "The Art of Practical Whist" you will see capital invested in whist compared to consols. Don't run away with the idea that there is any such resemblance: those numerous foreign *securities* or limited companies nearer home, where you receive no interest and lose your principal, or those public conveyances suggested by the elder Mr. Weller, would be closer analogues.

Whist is not a certainty, neither is it true that you will every year find your account exactly square on the 31st of December: it is a popular fallacy devised by those who win, to keep the losers in good spirits.

An old friend of mine—veracious as men go, and always considered of fairly sound mind and free from delusions, though a very inferior whist-player—has

often assured me that he won over three thousand points for three years running (close on ten thousand in the aggregate.) If this statement is correct, and I have no reason to doubt it,—I often played with him and he almost invariably won,—it is manifest that, after paying for the cards, some of us, when we called at the bank for our dividends, must have had to go empty away.

I have played whist—club, domestic, or bumble-puppy—pretty regularly for a quarter of a century; and the only conclusion I have arrived at so far is the very vague one that I shall either win or lose—I don't know at all which—for five years in succession, or multiples of five.

For the first ten years I won considerably, for the next five I lost considerably, then for another five I won slightly, and the last five (I am thankful to say I am now getting well into the fifth) I have lost again.*

I have no doubt things equalize themselves in the long run: the difficulty is that I am unable to give you any idea, even approximately, what the duration of a long run is.†

* To the sneer that I lose now because I play worse, I reply, it is quite possible I do not play so well as I did five years ago; I make the sneerer a present of the admission. But I play better than I did twenty years ago: when playing against as good a players as I do now, if I did not win every time I sat down, I was astonished.

† "An experiment that does not go on to millions is very little use in determining such propositions. It can be demonstrated to the satis-

During a part of that first period, extending over a year and a quarter, I played long whist—five points to the bumper—more than fifty times, and never but once won less than twelve points. If we may believe Herodotus, in his day the end was not always visible from the beginning; and so it is now. I have won rubbers against all the cards, and with all the cards I have lost them.

Sometimes I cannot lose a rubber, sometimes I cannot win one; at one time cards will beat their makers, at another the makers will beat the cards; and these results occur without rhyme or reason, in defiance of any system of play. Don't imagine for a moment that I suggest play is of no consequence: I merely say that you will frequently see the cards or the players run wild, and that the actual result—winning or losing—is beyond your own control.

I have known twenty-four successive rubbers lost, and I have won seventeen more than once. I have lost nine hundred and thirty points in two months, and a hundred and fifty-four in two days. I have lost a bumper in two deals, holding one trump in each

faction of every one, that the odds, after having won the first game in a rubber, in favor of winning one of the next two games, is three to one. Yet Mr. Clay considered that five to two was a bad bet: and we have lost not only at five to two, but at two to one, and on one occasion we actually lost the long odds in two hundred bets, a hundred and three times: so that, if we were to take this result as of any value, the odds would be slightly in favor of losing a rubber when you had won the first game, which is absurd."—*Westminster Papers.*

hand; and with the same partner, the same seats, and the same cards won the next rubber but one in two deals, again holding one trump in each hand.

I have seen a player with no trump and no winning card lose a treble, and the very next hand, again with no trump and no winning card,—assisted to some extent by his partner,—score nine; and on one melancholy occasion my partner and myself were unable to raise a trump between us.

I have held three Yarboroughs in two hours (a Yarborough is a hand containing no card above a nine), and a hand with no card above a seven at least twice.* With ace, knave, to five trumps, two kings, and trumps led up to me, I have lost five by cards; and with queen, knave, ten, eight, three, two, diamonds (trumps), spade king, ace and king of hearts, ace, king, queen, and another club, and the original lead, I lost the odd trick.

I have played a set match; and although I never bet, as I fancied we had a shade the best of the play, and the other side made the liberal offer of six to four, it tempted me: I took it, and won five rubbers running. I once cut about the best player I know six times consecutively. My partner laid six to five to commence with, and as we won the first game—a single—he gave five to two; and that was the only game we won in those six rubbers. Busses—not

* There was a hand recently at Surbiton with no card above a six.

unds—is much nearer the mark. Irrespective of the time of day, you can either go to bed when you have won two rubbers, or when you have lost them; you can persevere to the bitter end, either when you are winning, or when you are losing; you can take any of the measures mentioned in the last lecture, or adopt any other system you please. But there is one rule with no exception: though no earthly power can prevent your winning or losing, the actual moment of that gain or loss always depends upon yourself and your partner. If you should ever lose eighty or a hundred points at one sitting, that deplorable result will never take place without your active connivance; a trick lost here, and a trick lost there, an exposed card, or something of that kind,—the consequence of which is always intensified when you are losing,—will just make the difference, every now and then, between winning and losing a rubber.

During the bad forty-eight hours I had when I lost a hundred and fifty-four points, I was attending carefully to the play: the cards were abominable; and, making no allowances for what might have happened if my partner and I had only been omniscient, simple little mistakes of the kind just mentioned accounted for thirty-two of those points.

If there is such a thing as luck,—and I believe there is,—don't lie down, and let it kick you.

Always play with reasonable care and attention: if

a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well; and when you hold cards which you do not consider quite equal to your deserts, instead of playing worse on that account,—as most people do,—take a little extra care.

If your pocket-money gives out, or you feel that your cards are too bad for endurance, give up playing altogether: but, if you continue to play, don't accentuate your misfortunes by your own shortcomings; it is bad enough to retire to your crib with empty pockets, without a guilty conscience in addition.

## LECTURE VIII.

### ON THINGS IN GENERAL.

" 'The time has come,' the walrus said,
'To talk of many things.' "

To become a fair whist-player,* no wonderful attributes are required: common-sense, a small amount of knowledge,—easily acquired,—*ordinary observation of facts as they occur*, and experience, the result of that observation,—not the experience obtained by repeating the same idiotic mistakes year after year,—are about all. To save you trouble, the experience of all the best players for the last hundred years has been collected into a series of maxims which you will find in any whist-book: these maxims you should know ;†

* Not a fine whist-player ; for this is a rare bird, much more rare than a black swan (these can be bought any day at Jamrach's by the couple, but even in the present hard times, when, I am informed, the markets are glutted with everything, he has not one fine whist-player in stock): to him, in addition to common sense and attention, genius and a thorough knowledge of Cavendish are essential.

† "Although these maxims may occasionally speak of things never to be done, and others always to be done, you must remember that no rules are without exception, and few more open to exceptional cases than rules for whist."—CLAY.

but though you know every maxim that ever was written, and are "bland, passionate, deeply religious, and also paint beautifully in water-colors," if among your other virtues the power of assimilating facts as they occur is not included, this will not avail you in the least.

Bumblepuppy—according to its own account—demands much more superfine qualities: e.g., inspiration, second-sight, instinct, and intuitive perception of false cards and singletons, and an intimate acquaintance with a mysterious and Protean bogey called "the game,"—in short, everything but reason* (all these fine words, when boiled and peeled, turn out sometimes to mean ordinary observation, but more usually gross ignorance). So much for its theory: its practice is this:—

## PRACTICE OF BUMBLEPUPPY.

"This is an anti-Christian game,
Unlawful both in thing and name."—*Hudibras.*

(1) Lead a singleton whenever you have one.

(2) With two small trumps and no winning card, lead a trump.

* Just as orthodoxy has been defined to be your own doxy, so "the game" usually means "your own idea of the game at the time."

I have called it Protean because it assumes so many different forms (being mainly based on results), and, like the nigger's little pig, runs about to such an extent that it is impossible to get a clear view of it.

(3) Ruff a suit of which your partner clearly holds the best, if you are weak in trumps.

(4) Never ruff anything if you are strong.

(5) Never return your partner's trump if you can possibly avoid it, unless he manifestly led it to bring in a suit of which you led a singleton.

(6) Deceive him whenever you get a chance.

(7) Open a new suit every time you have the lead.

(8) Never pay any attention to your partner's first discard, unless it is a forced discard (p. 50). Lead your own suit.

(9) Never force him under any circumstances unless you hold at least five trumps with two honors; even if you lose the rubber by it, play "the game!"

(10) Devote all your remaining energies to looking for a signal in the last trick: if you are unable to discover which was your partner's card,—after keeping the table waiting for two minutes,—lead him a trump on suspicion.

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Play all your cards alike, without emphasis or hesitation: how can you expect your partner to have any confidence in your play when it is evident to him from your hesitation that you have no confidence in it yourself?

If your partner renounces, and you think fit to in-

quire whether he is void of the suit, do so quietly: don't offer a hint for his future guidance by glaring or yelling at him.

Don't ask idiotic questions: if you led an ace, and the two, three, and four are played to the trick, what is the use of asking your partner to draw his card? If you hold all the remaining cards of a suit, why inquire whether he has any?

Don't talk in the middle of the hand.* However you may be tempted to use bad language,—and I must admit the temptation is often very great,—always recollect that though your Latin grammar says "humanum est irasci," the antidote grows near the bane; for—at the bottom of the very preceding page—it also says "pii orant taciti." The wisest man

"'Tis best sometimes your censure to restrain."—POPE.

who ever lived says, "He that holdeth his peace is counted wise, and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding." Such a reputation appears

* Though "whist" is reported to be an old English word meaning "silence," and though it is advisable for many reasons that it should be played with reasonable quiet, it is not at all compulsory to conduct yourself as if in the monastery of La Trappe: you have a perfect right—as far as the laws of whist are concerned—to discuss at any time the price of stocks, the latest scandal, or even the play going on, "provided that no intimation whatever, by word or gesture, be given as to the state of your own hand or the game."—*Etiquette of Whist.*

At bumblepuppy you had better waive this right altogether; for if under any circumstances you open your mouth, you will infallibly put your foot into it.

cheap at the price; but if you are of the opinion of J. P. Robinson, that "they didn't know everything down in Judee," you can call your partner any names you like as soon as the hand is over.* You need not be at all particular what for: any crime of omission or commission—real or fancied—will do. If, after the game is over, you discover that it might have been saved or won by doing something different, however idiotic, grumble at him.†

* "Avoid playing with those who instruct, or rather find fault, while the hand is playing. They are generally unqualified by ignorance, and judge from consequences; but, if not, advice while playing does more harm than good."—MATHEWS.

"The empty vessel makes the greatest sound."—SHAKSPEARE.

"Talking over the hand *after* it has been played is not uncommonly called a bad habit and an annoyance; I am firmly persuaded it is one of the readiest ways of learning whist."—CLAY.

† "'O dreary life!' we cry, 'O dreary life!'
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping strife."

"The education of the whist-player is peculiar. How he becomes a whist-player, nobody knows. He never learns his alphabet or the catechism, or anything that he ought to do. He appears full-grown, mushroom-like. He remembers some one blowing him up for doing something he ought not to have done, and somebody else blowing him up for not doing something else; and he is blown up to the end of the chapter. This phase of being blown up is varied by grumbling, sometimes aloud, sometimes *sotto voce;* so that the whist-player is reared on scolding and grumbling as other youngsters are reared on pap. Truly this is a happy life. Some men grumble on principle because it is a national privilege, and they avail themselves of the Englishman's birthright.

'A sect whose chief devotion lies
In odd perverse antipathies;
In falling out with that or this,
And finding somewhat still amiss;

It is quite legitimate to revile him for not playing cards he never held: if he should have the temerity to point out that the facts are against you, revile the facts.

If there is really a diabolical mistake in the case, and you happen to have made it yourself, revile him with additional ferocity.

Failing any other grievance, you can always prove to demonstration—and at interminable length—that if his cards, or both your cards, had been just the reverse of what they were, the result would have been different. This certainly opens a wide field for speculation; but it is neither an instructive nor entertaining amusement, though it kills time.

There is a theory, which, according to some evil-disposed persons, may easily be made too much of,—the injury to yourself being remote and doubtful, while the gratification of annoying him is certain and immediate,—that abusing your partner, as having a tendency to make him play worse, is a mistake from a pecuniary point of view. Of course it is a mistake,

> More peevish, cross, and splenetic
> Than dog distract, or monkey sick.'—*Hudibras.*

Some do it because they believe, that, if they grumble enough, it will bring them luck. Some do it in the hope that they will excite sympathy, and that their friends will feel for their ill-fortune, which, by the by, whist-players never do. Some grumble to annoy their friends, and we are bound to say these succeed."—*Westminster Papers.*

> "The croaking nuisance lurked in every nook;
> And the land stank—so numerous was the fry."—COWPER.

but not for such a paltry reason as that: take a higher standpoint! Whether you are winning or losing,—

> "You should *never* let
> Your angry passions rise."—WATTS.

Don't cry!

> "Ill betides a nation when
> She sees the tears of bearded men."

And you will have a beard yourself some time, if you don't lead the penultimate of five (see p. 25). Without exciting the slightest sympathy on the part of an unfeeling public, crying deranges the other secretions. The Laureate says tears are idle, and professes ignorance of their meaning: if he played whist, he would know that they injure the cards and make them sticky.

Don't play out of your turn, nor draw your card before that turn comes.

Don't ride a hobby to death! *In ordinary whist* three prevailing hobbies are so cruelly over-ridden that I am surprised the active and energetic Mr. Colam has never interfered: these are,—

(1) The penultimate of a long suit;

(2) The signal for trumps;

(3) Not forcing your partner unless you are strong in trumps—under any circumstances.

The first is nothing but a nuisance.* The second

* "They are intent on some wretched crotchet like the lowest but one."

"Every time he can lead a lowest but one, no matter what the state of the game or the score, that lead he is sure to make; and we believe there are some neophytes who would lose their money with pleasure if they could only tell their partners afterwards that they had led the lowest but one."—*Westminster Papers.*

is stated to simplify the game, and to cause greater attention to be paid to it: practically the entire time of the players is taken up either in devising absurd signals, or in looking for and failing to see them. The third is responsible for losing about as many games as anything I am acquainted with, though the constant and aimless changing of suits runs it close.

Is it any reason—because you have no trumps—that you should announce that circumstance early in the hand to the general public, and prevent your partner making one? If he has them all, you cannot injure him; if he has not, the adversaries will play through him and strangle him: how is it that you are afraid to let your partner make a certain trick, but you are never afraid to open a new suit?

There is an impression abroad that there is a law of whist somewhere to this effect: "Never force your partner at any stage of the game unless you yourself are strong in trumps."

Let us see what the authorities say on the point. "Keep in mind that general maxims pre-suppose the game and hand at their commencement, and that material changes in them frequently require that a different mode of play should be adopted." "It is a general maxim not to force your partner unless strong in trumps yourself. There are, however, many exceptions to this rule; as,—

"(1) If your partner has led a single card;

"(2) If it saves or wins a particular point;

"(3) If great strength in trumps is declared against you;

"(4) If you have a probability of a saw,

"(5) If your partner has been forced, and did not lead trumps;

"(6) It is often right in playing for an odd trick.

"If your partner shows a weak game, force him whether or not you are otherwise entitled to do it."—MATHEWS.

With a weak trump hand, force your partner,—

"(1) When he has already shown a desire to be forced, or weakness in trumps;

"(2) When you have a cross ruff;

"(3) When you are playing a close game, as for the odd trick, and often when one trick saves or wins the game or a point;

"(4) When great strength in trumps has been declared against you."—CAVENDISH.

"Do not force your partner unless to make sure of the tricks required to save or win the game;

"Or unless he has been already forced, and has not led a trump;

"Or unless he has asked to be forced by leading from a single card, or two weak cards;

"Or unless the adversary has led, or asked for trumps."—CLAY.

"Unless your partner has shown great strength in

trumps, or a wish to get them drawn, or has refused to ruff a doubtful card, give him the option of making a small trump; unless you have some good reason for not doing so, other than a weak suit of trumps in your own hand."—*Art of Practical Whist.*

With these extracts before you, perhaps you will dismiss from your mind the popular fallacy that you are under any compulsion to lose the game because your trumps are not quite so strong as you could wish.

Make a note of this.

Maxims were not invented for the purpose of preventing you from either saving or winning the game, though it is their unfortunate fate to be epitomized and perverted out of all reasonable shape. The ill-advised dictum, "Suppose the adversaries are four, and you, with the lead, have a bad hand: the best play is, in defiance of all system, to lead out your best trump," was comparatively innocuous, till some ingenious person, with a turn for abbreviation, altered it into, "Whenever you hold nothing lead a trump!" Use your common sense.*

I have gone into this matter at considerable length, because I am convinced that however many people, once affluent, are now in misery and want, owing to

* "Common-sense (which in truth is very uncommon) is the best sense I know of. Abide by it: it will counsel you best."—*Chesterfield's Letters.*

their not having led trumps with five,—Clay gave the number as eleven thousand,—a far larger number have been reduced to this deplorable condition by changing suits, and refusing *on principle* to save the game by forcing their partner.

Before quitting the subject, there is another branch of it worthy of a little consideration. When your partner has shown by his discard which is his suit, and you hold two or three small cards in it, however strong you may be in trumps,—*unless every thing depends on one trick*,—do you expect to gain much by forcing him and making yourself third player? Though it is usual to play in this absurd way, is there any objection to first playing his suit, and—as, *ex hypothesi*, you are strong in trumps—forcing him afterwards?

Play always as simply and intelligibly as you can. * Never think? † Know! Leave thinking to the Teuton.

> "A Briton knows; or, if he knows it not,
> He ought."—COWPER.

* In addition to your partner not being able to see your cards—in itself a disadvantage—he is, by an immutable law of nature, much inferior in perception to yourself: you should bear this in mind, and not be too hard on the poor fellow.

† This is at first sight rather an appalling proposition, but the advice I give you I have always endeavored to follow myself; and I am not a solitary case, for in "*The Nineteenth-Century Review*" for May, 1879, I find the writer of one of the articles in the same boat. This thoughtful writer—he must have been thoughtful, otherwise his lucubration would not have been accepted—says, "I have given up the practice of thinking, or it may be I never had it."

After the game has begun, the time for thinking has passed : as soon as a card is led, it is the time for action, the time to bring your previously acquired knowledge to bear.

P.S.—When pointing out your rights, I omitted to state, that, before you proceed to give your partner a piece of your mind, you should always call your honors ; for by neglecting this simple precaution you will often lay yourself open to a crushing rejoinder,—*Experto crede.*

## LECTURE IX.

### THINKING.

"With some unmeaning thing, that they call thought"—POPE.

NEVER think!

Unless you have some remarkably good reason for taking your own course, do as you are told. If your partner leads you a small trump, return it at once.

"Gratia ab officio, quod mora tardat, abest."

This a much more simple and satisfactory plan than to proceed to think that he may have no more, or that the fourth player must hold major tenace. No one will admit more readily than I do, that you are much the better player of the two (Note *, p. 77): still allow him to have some idea of the state of his own hand.

Don't think, whenever you see a card played, that it is necessarily false: as, on the whole, true cards are in the majority, you are rather more likely to be wrong than right, and the betting must be against you in the long-run.

"My business and your own is not to inquire
Into such matters, but to mind our cue,—
Which is to act as we are bid to do."—BYRON.

If you are blessed with a sufficiently sharp eye to the left, you may occasionally *know* that a card is false; but I should not describe knowledge acquired in that way as thinking, I should use quite a different expression.

With the military gentleman who anathematized intellect, I deeply sympathize. Profound thought about facts which have just taken place under your own eye is the bane of whist.

Why imitate Mark Twain's fiery steed? Why, when it is your business to go on, "lean your head against something, and think?"

Whether you have seen a thing, or not seen it, there can be no necessity for thought. Recondite questions—such as whether the seven is the best of a suit of which all the others but the six are out, or whether a card is the twelfth or thirteenth—can be answered by a rational being in two ways, and two only: either he knows, or he does not know; there is no *tertium quid*. The curious practice of gazing intently at the chandelier, and looking as intelligent as nature will permit,—if not more so,—though it is less confusing than going to the last trick for information, and imposes upon some people, is no answer at all:* this, in whist circles, is called, or miscalled *thinking*. It is not a new invention, for it has been

* Making passes in the air with your hand, as if you were about to mesmerize the table, is another favorite stratagem.

known and practised from the earliest times. "There is a generation, oh, how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up" (Prov. xxx. 13, B.C. 1000, Pecksniff, who had an extensive acquaintance with the weaknesses of human nature, knew it: you, and all other schoolboys are adepts at it.

In Greek the very name of man— —was derived from this peculiar method of feigning intelligence, and it was by no means unknown to the Romans.

> "Pronaque cum spectant animalia cœtera terram,
> Os homini sublime dedit cœlumque tueri."

But, however ancient and venerable the practice may be, it is one of those numerous practices more honored in the breach than in the observance. Surely, looking at the table is more in accordance with the dictates of common sense than attempting to eliminate unknown quantities from a chandelier. In the one you have gas, and probably water; on the other, lying open before you,—the data required. I have now endeavored, not to teach you either whist or bumblepuppy, but to point out a few of the differences between them, and to start you on the right road. The first is a game of reason and common sense played in combination with your partner: the second is a game of inspiration, haphazard, and absurdity, where your partner is your deadliest enemy. I have made a few extracts from Mathews: partly because I

don't like novelties merely because they are novelties; partly to convince the bumblepuppist (if anything will convince him) that when he tells me the recognized play is a new invention, introduced by Cavendish for his especial annoyance, he does not know what he is talking about; and partly to show you that since that book was written—eighty years ago—the main principles of whist are almost unaltered.

The chapter on etiquette is since his time; but, though the game has been cut down one-half, take away from Mathews his slight partiality for sneakers (to be accounted for by the possibility of his partner at that remote period being even a more dangerous lunatic than yours is at present, and the consequent necessity of playing more on the defensive; for leading singletons, whatever else it may do, does not injure the leader),* take away from the play of to-day its signal, its echo, and its penultimate of a long suit, —all excrescences of doubtful advantage for general purposes, and the last two more adapted to that antediluvian epoch when human life was longer, —and the continuity of the game is clear.† Whether whist

* The difference here is more apparent than real: Mathews, with considerable limitations, advocates leading singletons. Nowadays the practice is decried; but I regret to say, that, as far as my experience goes, the principal obstacle to leading a singleton is not having a singleton to lead.

† "We suspect that Cavendish very often must have objected to that ancient plagiarist Mathews for stealing his ideas."

would gain anything by their omission, I am unable to say. The attention now always on the strain in *looking* for its accidents would have a spare moment or two to devote to its essentials: whether it would do anything of the kind, is another matter.

Those followers of Darwin and believers in the doctrine of evolution, to whom it is a source of comfort that an ascidian monad and not Eve was their first parent, must find the whist-table rather a stumbling block: they will see there uncommonly few specimens of the survival of the fittest.

The philosopher of Chelsea long since arrived at the unsatisfactory and sweeping conclusion, that the population of these islands are mostly fools; and he has made no exception for the votaries of whist. Still, it has the reputation of being a very pretty game, though this reputation must be based to a great extent on conjecture; for, apart from its other little peculiarities,—on some of which I have briefly touched,—its features are so fearfully disfigured by bumblepuppy, that it is as difficult to give a positive opinion as to say whether a woman suffering from a malignant small-pox might or might not be good

"If their ideas are not identical, it is rather difficult to find where the one begins, and the other ends."—*Westminster Papers.*

"I contend that there is no essential difference between modern and old-fashioned whist; i.e., between Hoyle and Cavendish, Mathews and J. C.—MOGUL.

looking under happier circumstances. The sublime self-confidence expressed in the distich,—

> "When I see thee as thou art,
> I'll praise thee as I ought,"—

has not been vouchsafed to me; but if ever I obtain a clear view of it, I will undertake to report upon it to the best of my ability.

You may have heard, that if you are ignorant of whist you are preparing for yourself a miserable old age: it is by no means certain that a knowledge of it —as practised at this particular epoch—is to be classed with the beatitudes.

## LECTURE X.

### DETERIORATION OF WHIST: ITS CAUSES AND CURE.

"Past and to come seem best ; things present, worst."—SHAKSPEARE.

In my time I believe whist has, on the whole, deteriorated.* It mistakes means for ends, is more tricky, more difficult, more cantankerous. With regard to common mistakes,—inability to hold a few cards without dropping them on the table, or to play them one at a time ; inability to count thirteen, to recollect the best card, or whether it was your opponents, your partner, or yourself, who first led a suit ; winning your partner's trick, or not winning your adversary's ; leading out of turn, revoking, and so on,—there is not much difference.

As long as I can recollect, whist has been gorged

* "The game is not the simple and straightforward game it was : it is more erratic and more difficult."

"Whist is more and more, and year by year, a game of brag, a game for gambling, a game in which we have to study the idiosyncrasies of the players as well as the cards themselves. We have to deduct from imperfect data, and when our inference is wrong we have a great chance of a scolding from an infuriated partner."

"Modern whist in a nut-shell : signs and signals and a short supply of brains."—*Westminster Papers.*

with these; and neither the hydraulic ram, nor any other of the improved mechanical appliances of the present day, can squeeze more into a thing than it will hold. Architects of card-rooms are to blame for a good deal of this bad whist: it is impossible to play in a badly lighted or badly ventilated room. Whist players have often told me exactly what they require, and it is very odd they cannot have it.

With a large fire, the room hermetically sealed, and everybody smoking, the temperature should never exceed sixty-one degrees and a half, nor be below sixty. There must be neither doors (they admit draughts) nor windows. Windows are open—allow me to withdraw that offensive word—windows are exposed to two objections: (1) some scoundrel, regardless of consequences, might open one; (2) instead of being placed in the ceiling or the floor,—where you would naturally expect to find them,—they are always at the side of the room, and no whist-player can see a card with the windows in such a position.

Candles do not give sufficient light, and gas is unbearable. A suggestion to try an attic with a skylight fell through (not through the skylight—I mean, the suggestion failed) because no one was able to go upstairs: a lift would have overcome that objection, but the temperature difficulty remained.

This only applies to clubs: curiously enough, in small stuffy back-rooms in private houses, gas never causes

headache; and neither a mephitic atmosphere nor a temperature of one hundred and twenty degrees is at all disagreeable.

Joking apart, the *fons et origo mali* is Law 91, and not only the head and front of the offending, but its barrel and hindquarters as well. Since the introduction of signalling, the subsequent petrolatry, and all the elaborate functions of that cultus, an exaggerated importance (increasing in geometric ratio with every additional convention) has been attached to the last trick,—the only place where, by universal consent, anything can reasonably be "looked for;" and if you, after seeing the cards played, informing your partner which is yours, (of course, in answer to his inquiry), gathering the trick, and arranging it neatly, should imagine you have done with it, you will be the victim of a fond delusion,—using "fond" in the old acceptation of the word. First, your partner will ask to see it at least twice; then your opponents, one or both, will probably grab at it without asking, and put it back in a dishevelled condition: it is useless to specify what their mental state must be, and unfortunately, by the time all these irritating performances have been gone through, and you have again arranged the trick symmetrically, you will find yours is not all you could wish. You can avoid some of these annoyances by allowing your partner to gather the tricks: but, from his slovenly mode of doing so, you will never be

able to see how many he has; and, just as you are endeavoring to concentrate your attention at a critical point, it will be distracted by your having to make an intricate calculation how the game stands, the data being the cards remaining in your own hand, and two confused heaps on the table. As long as this is permitted, whist is out of the question. One of the principal uses of the new method of suspended animation will turn out to be, that all decent whist-players will have to submit themselves to it, and remain, arranged in rows on shelves, till that law is abrogated.

The number of shelves required will not appreciably affect the timber trade.*

In the good time coming, promised by the poet to those boys who wait a little longer; when the present inspired and last-trick-inspecting generation is in the silent tomb, or cremated, as the case may be, and a new school, basing its play on common-sense and attention, has arisen,—there may be an improvement. Without joining the little girl whose world was hollow, and whose doll was stuffed with sawdust, in her aspiration, I am not an optimist; and though this improvement, like the millenium, may be looming in the more or less remote future, I see no sign of it at present.

* This refuge against boredom has fallen through. Seeing an article on Suspended Animation in *The Contemporary Review* for November, 1879, I pounced upon it, thinking it might contain the recipe; and found to my disgust that the process, so circumstantially narrated, was a hoax.

If "to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the sun," also "*a time to lose and a time to cast away*" (Eccl. i. 1–6), it seems clear to me there must be a time for bumblepuppy.

Some people deny this: they say that the argument proves too much. They point out that Shakspeare says there are

> "Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything;"

and that, as this could not apply to bumblepuppy, these passages only show that it was unknown when they were written.

Another argument of theirs against the antiquity of bumblepuppy, based on the passage, "In all labor there is profit," is altogether fallacious and unworthy of consideration: they admit the labor, but deny the profit. This must have had its origin east of Temple Bar, where it is held there is no profit unless it assumes a pecuniary form. But repressing your innate tendency to profane swearing, curbing your evil passions generally, and the cultivation (under considerable difficulties) of nearly all the cardinal virtues, as inuring to your moral well-being, are a profit of the most positive kind:* to be able to give a definite

* While practising these virtues you are not obliged to look pleasant unless you feel so: this would be dissimulation. Heine's plan fulfils all reasonable requirements:—

> "Once I said in my despairing,
> 'This must break my spirit now;'

But I bore it and am bearing,
Only do not ask me how."

answer to the long-standing conundrum, "Is life worth living?" is something.

However, you can draw your own conclusion. The extract from Shakspeare is—I confess—difficult to get over: still, when Solomon makes use of these remarkable words, "a time to lose and a time to cast away," I fail to see what he could have had in his mind, unless it was this very game.

At any rate, one thing is clear: bumblepuppy exists now, and is not a pretty game (there can be no two opinions about that), neither—judging from the demeanor and language of its exponents—is it a pleasant game. I append a hand which is, I think, the finest specimen of it I ever saw. Judge for yourself. I had jotted down a few further remarks on this repulsive subject; but, on reading them over, they seem to be not only inconsistent with that extreme reverence which is due to the young, but absolutely unfit for publication.

"Quod factu fœdum est, idem est et dictu turpe."
R. I. P.

The two games are now before you: let me conclude the lecture with one more extract from my favorite classic,—

"Utrum horum mavis accipe."

SPECIMEN OF BUMBLEPUPPY IN EXCELSIS.

Score love all. Trumps diamond 9. Z by a bumblepuppist with the highest opinion of himself.

| | A. | X. | B. | Z. | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | H 5 | [H 6] | H 2 | H 4 | |
| 2. | D 2 | D 5 | D 4 | [D Kg] | ! |
| 3. | S 3 | S Kg | [S Ace] | S 4 | !! |
| 4. | S 7 | S Kn | S 2 | [S Qn] | |
| 5. | D 8 | [D 10] | S 10 | S 9 | !!! |
| 6. | D 3 | D 7 | D 6 | [D Qn] | !!!! |
| 7. | C 3 | D Kn | [D Ace] | D 9 | !!!!! |
| 8. | C 4 | H 8 | [S 8] | C 2 | |
| 9. | C 6 | C 8 | [S 6] | C 9 | |
| 10. | C 7 | H Qn | [S 5] | C Kn | |
| 11. | H 10 | [H Ace] | H 3 | H 9 | |
| 12. | H 8 | [C Ace] | C 5 | C Kg | |
| 13. | H Kn | [C Qn] | C 10 | H Kg | |

This is the worst hand ever played, without exception: it is a microcosm, complete in itself, and contains examples of stupidity, selfishness, duplicity, defiance of all recognized principles, and every conceivable villany.

*Trick* 2.—The misplaced ingenuity in deceiving X as to the position of the Qn is worth notice.

*Trick* 3.—The lead of the only weak suit, in preference to the strong suits of club, playing up to declared weakness in hearts, or returning the trump, is very neat.

*Trick* 5.—The force here of the trump leader, inducing him to believe that Z at any rate holds the remaining spades,—an illusion carefully fostered by B,—is especially good.

*Trick* 7.—The return of the trump at this point, with the best trump (probably) and three long spades (certainly) declared against him in one hand, is a real gem.

## THE DOMESTIC RUBBER.

A third variety of whist, the domestic rubber, I have passed over in silence. What takes place in the sanctity of private life, it would be as unbecoming for me to divulge as for you to seek to know.

> "O'er all its faults we draw a tender veil,
> So great its sorrows, and so sad its tale."

At the same time I don't think I am violating any confidence in stating that you will neither find there signalling, nor the penultimate of five and its developments: yet, though free from those annoyances, the game, even when mitigated by muffins, music and the humanizing influence of woman, is inexpressibly dreary, and you had better keep out of it if you can;

but should this not be practicable,—for some relative from whom you have a reasonable expectation of a tip may be staying in the house, and you may be compelled to sacrifice yourself either on the altar of duty or self-interest,—then never forget that sweetness of temper is much more important here than knowledge of whist, and, consoling yourself with the two following reflections :—

(1) That (according to Epicurus) prolonged pain is rather pleasant than otherwise, extreme pain always short. *

(2) That those whom the gods love die young,—

When your hour arrives, bare your throat to the knife with a smile.

So shall your memory smell sweet and blossom in domestic circles.

## DOUBLE DUMMY.

Double dummy is not whist: it much more closely resembles chess. One is a game of inference: the other is an exact science, where the position of every card is known.

Often, in the course of a controversy on the latter game, you will hear one of the disputants imagine he has clinched the matter by challenging the other to play double dummy: it would quite as germane to suggest

* He is right to some extent: the domestic rubber always closes early.

trial by battle, or to move an adjournment to a good dry skittle-alley.

"The bearings of these observations lays in the application of them. That a'n't no part of my duty. Avast then, keep a bright look-out for'ard, and good luck to you."

## EPILOGUE.

Some readers of these lectures have complained that it is often difficult to discriminate when they are serious and when they "attempt to be funny;" and have suggested that the attempts should be indicated clearly by a note,—thus: ☞ this is a goak!—and the remainder printed in red ink. While fully recognizing their difficulty, and sympathizing with them, I am unable to entertain either proposition. The first is an American innovation, utterly at variance with the conservative character of the work; and it is a fatal objection to the other, that, if whatever is important were picked out in red, many well-disposed children would at once rush to the natural—but highly erroneous—conclusion that they had got hold of a Prayer-Book. Another complaint, that my advice to bumblepuppists is likely to lead them farther astray, is beside the question; even assuming—for the sake of this argument—such a thing to be possible. The point is, whether I have described "the game" correctly; and I am prepared to stake my reputation as an experienced bumblepuppy-player, that I have done so without manifesting fear, favor, or affection.

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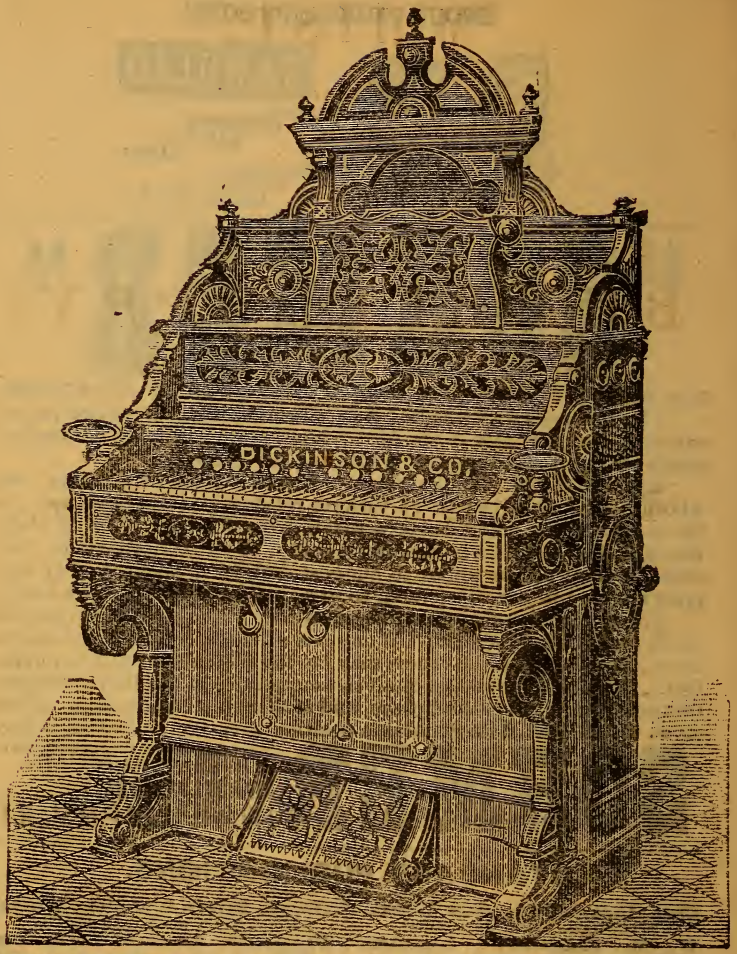


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